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# Block Heads

Lady About Town turns Lady About Stark (Raving) Street

BY DANIEL BORDEN

**It's** hard to believe 2011 marks the seventh annual Red Cap Garage/Boxxes Video Lounge Pride Block Party—it seems like an institution that's been around since, well, the dawn of Pride. Every year, rain or shine—although we always hope for the latter—thousands of Pride partygoers cram themselves into large, fenced-off areas on Stark Street to mingle, watch and listen to the greatest and gayest in-deejays, live performers and to generally embrace a certain level of queer debauchery. That, and to perhaps glimpse a famous porn star or two—or at least a sexy out-of-towner.

Despite recent neighborhood gentrification, the Stark party hasn't slowed, and throughout the year, Red Cap and Boxxes have done their part to attract big names—such as Sherry Vine, Joey Arias and Pandora Boxx—while cultivating diverse local acts and unique shows. As venue manager Justin Buckles points out, “Everyone knows that the decentralization of Stark Street has taken a toll on the gay community. Back in the day, people would park in one place and go to four or five bars on Stark Street. Now you have to drive to get to each gay destination.”

“Our venue isn't any less of a destination,” he continues. “The scene is just so spread out that when people are set on going to one place, that's where they go. ‘Hot and not’ comes and goes in waves.”

Indeed, but this year shows no signs of “not hot” status, as Red Cap and Boxxes plan to close off Stark between 10th and 11th Avenues, joining forces to present a lineup that's both retro and relevant. This year's celebration will be hosted by nationally revered diva Heklina, most famous for creating San Francisco's longest-running drag show, Trannyshack, and known in Portland for her popular Miss Thing competition. Heklina wields a relentless, razor-sharp, merciless wit. She's served as grand marshal of San Francisco's Pride Parade and won the 2009 Pride Creativity Award for Outstanding Artistic Contribution to the LGBTQ community.

The headlining musical act is '90s pop sensation Amber, best known for gay anthems “This Is Your Night,” “Sexual (La Da Di)” and the infamous “If You Could Read My Mind” cover, a track recorded with Stars on 54 for the film 54. If Pride is synonymous with anything, it's reliving our favorite, catchiest queer theme songs, some that take us back decades, some that our community's



Sights from 2010's Stark St. Block Party

youngest queers aren't even familiar with. Opening for Amber will be Lisa Dank with DJ Nark.

As for how organizers go about procuring artists for the street-spanning gay fest, Buckles shares, “We look at a broad range of talent for the block party. Anyone we consider must have some sort of name, or at least be well known in the queer community. We try to mix in local talent with celebrity talent. We know there's a lot of talent in Portland so we want to showcase that as well.”

Some of the names in the local mix are established performers. Along with the Rose City Sirens and ever-present ChiChi and Chonga and Ecstasy Inferno, all of last year's “Miss Thing” titleholders (from the aforementioned competition) are on tap to perform—quite the coup, and all the more fitting for

Heklina, our hostess. Deejays tasked with moving the masses include Lunchlady, Pornstar, Mani and FSODJ. It's shaping up to be quite the eclectic—dare we say fabulous?—bill.

How does a venue go about meshing so much entertainment? “When we put a block party together, we stretch out the talent and performances so everyone has something to look forward to,” Buckles says. “We generally open with deejays, move to performances, then back to deejays, and so on. Our goal is to keep the energy fresh and dynamic.” From the sounds of the lineup—and if tradition is any indication—Red Cap and Boxxes will have no trouble packing the gays in again, even if the weather doesn't cooperate.

And the good people on Stark plan to give back. A portion of Block Party proceeds will be donated to Q Center. Buckles explains,



“We feel it's important to support those who support us. We have our weekly charity night, Versus, on Tuesday nights at Boxxes. The Q Center, for example, helps raise awareness about LGBTQ issues throughout Portland and beyond, which is why a portion of the proceeds from the block party and 100 percent of Friday door donations [from June 17's “Candy Shop” in Red Cap, “Latino Night Pride” in Boxxes] will go there.”

See you then. Good cause, great party—we'll be wearing short shorts.

*Gates open at 1 p.m. Sun., June 19; the party goes all night. Admission price was TBA as of press time. Red Cap/Boxxes is located at 1035 SW Stark St.; [redcapgarage.com](http://redcapgarage.com).*

**Stark** Street's Pride festivities aren't ever limited to Red Cap/Boxxes. Right next door, Pride revelers will find Portland's version of Cheers—Scandals, a Stark staple since 1979, with its own perpetually packed festivities. This year's street-closing shindig is dubbed Odyssey 2011, to benefit Cascade AIDS Project.

An odyssey typically refers to a long, eventful journey, and Scandals seems primed to offer its patrons something along those lines: a fun-filled weekend featuring a slew of skilled deejays and live bands. The two-day roster boasts the swing jazz stylings of Boy & Bean, Twisted Whistle's acoustic Americana fusion, the musical creatures known as Sexy Water Spiders and Tree Frogs, and more. ☐

*Gates open at 3 p.m. Fri., June 17, and at 2 p.m. Sat., June 18. Admission to Friday's festivities is \$8, Saturday runs \$10. The bar is also offering presale, weekend-long tickets for \$15. Scandals is located at 1125 SW Stark St.; [scandalspdx.com](http://scandalspdx.com).*